Chapter 1: The Birth of Cure Moonlight

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That day, Tsukikage Yuri visited the prefectural botanical garden that was located close to the center of Kibōgahana City.

That plot of land was home to 15,000 species of flowers, endangered plants and rare plants that couldn't be seen anywhere else in Japan. All of them lovingly cared for in and around 15 greenhouses of various sizes.

As her father was a botanist and worked at the botanical garden, Yuri had been visiting the garden countless of times since she was young. Under the influence of her father, Tsukikage Hideaki, Yuri became a big lover of flowers, able to both name all the flowers in the garden and state what they represented in the language of flowers.

Today, Yuri did not come to look at the flowers like she always did. She came to seek information regarding her father, who went missing in Paris, from the curator of the garden, Hanasaki Kaoruko.

10 minutes after her arrival, Kaoruko appeared in the dome-shaped greenhouse, having just finished her staff meeting. The dome-shaped greenhouse was known as the Doll House as it had a large plush toy sitting in the center of it. Kaoruko, a small, elderly lady in a white lab coat with wild fluttering hair, approached her with a powerful stride.

"Sorry for the wait, Yuri-chan."

"Thank you for taking the time to see me despite your busy schedule."

Out of respect, Yuri lowered her head.

"What are you talking about? I was the one who assigned him to the Great Heart Tree project. Not only do I feel responsible, I'm just as worried as your mother. I want to help the two of you out as much as I can."

As she spoke, she invited Yuri to sit at the table that was in front of the 2-meter-tall plush toy. Kaoruko then started brewing black tea and updated Yuri on the events that happened after the disappearance of Professor Tsukikage.

A week following the disappearance, a missing persons report was filed to the Paris Police Department via Interpol. A thorough search of all the hotels, motels and other places that Professor Tsukikage was likely to be staying at within the city was conducted but there were no leads. The scope of the search was expanded to the entirety of France but he was nowhere to be

found. The day before, through Interpol, the search was once again expanded using the search networks of various countries around the world.

After pouring the tea, Kaoruko set the teacup in front of Yuri and took a seat herself.

Yuri sat quietly, ignoring the teacup. An obvious expression of disappointment, obvious enough to Kaoruko, took over her face.

The face of a person who would be even more disappointed than herself, her mother, Haruna, appeared in her mind. Hearing the news of her husband's disappearance, her mother was not able to eat or sleep for three whole days out of worry. Her health deteriorated and she had to be hospitalized for 10 days and was just discharged 3 days ago.

- How in the world am I going to break the news to her?

Yuri thought to herself.

"Yuri-chan, your tea's getting cold."

Startled by Kaoruko's voice, Yuri said,

"What am I doing, spacing out like this…"

Forcing a smile, she took the teacup and smelled the tea.

The familiar scent of Darjeeling hit her nostrils. When she was in primary 4, the first tea that she ever drunk was Darjeeling. Around that time, she had started attending cram school. On the days when class ended late, she would always go home together with her father. While waiting for her father, Kaoruko would make her a cup of Darjeeling tea.

After pestering her mother, she began drinking tea regularly. However, because she couldn't get used to the Japanese-made teabags, she stopped drinking tea at home. It was just not as flavorful as the tea that Kaoruko would brew for her.

Since then, drinking tea at the botanical garden was a secret pleasure of hers. She would pout when Kaoruko wasn't around to make her tea, causing her father to ask her,

"Yuri, did something happen at cram school?"

This happened every now and then.

While Yuri was reminiscing,

"Haha, you haven't changed at all,"

said Kaoruko as she chuckled gently, referring to the fact that the pinky finger of Yuri's right hand was slightly extended as she held her teacup.

Yuri looked at her finger and blushed.

“I learnt this by watching you. When I was in primary school and had my first cup of Darjeeling here, I had no idea how to drink it. I mimicked what you did and it kind of became a habit of mine.”

“You learnt this from me?”

Looking at her own hand, she saw that her pinky finger was slightly extended, just like Yuri said.

“Dear me!”

Kaoruko burst out laughing and Yuri laughed along.

“I haven’t laughed this much in ages!”

“Me too… Oh!”

As Kaoruko started to speak, she let out a small gasp.

“What is it?”

“My granddaughter… heh, heh… does this with her pinky too.”

Kaoruko chuckled, looking like she was enjoying herself.

“Your granddaughter? The one who lives in Kamakura?”

“Yes. Her name’s Tsubomi. She’s really a granny’s girl so she’s guaranteed to copy me. I’m sure of it.”

“Oh my!”

At Yuri’s exclamation, both of them burst out laughing again.

Once they finished laughing, Kaoruko stood up to refill the tea.

“Kaoruko-san, I have to make preparations for dinner so I’ll be taking my leave here.”

“Oh, is your mother still unwell?”

“No, she keeps worrying when she’s at home. So she started working again to keep herself busy.”

“I see. Keeping oneself active can be a good distraction.”

“Thank you for the tea. Well then…”

Yuri stood up to take a bow.

“Huh?”

Letting out a small sound, she turned her head towards the big plush toy.

“Is something the matter?”

“No… It just felt like I was being watched.”

“Yuri-chan, you’re cute. Coupe must have taken a liking to you.”

Coupe was the name of the plush toy.

Yuri bashfully took another bow and exited the greenhouse.

Kaoruko giggled mischievously as she watched Yuri leave, bathed in the evening sunlight. Looking at the blank face of Coupe, she said,

“It wasn’t Coupe that was looking at Yuri, but you, Cologne. Am I right?”

Coupe, who was supposed to be a plush toy, blinked in agreement. In fact, Coupe wasn’t a plush toy at all, but a fairy.

The very next moment, a smaller, plush-toy-looking creature appeared from the heart mark on Coupe’s furry belly. His name was Cologne and he was also a fairy. Cologne, who was suspended in mid-air, spoke to Kaoruko.

“Cure Flower! She’s the one.”

One could sense the strength of his will from his unusually sharp pair of eyes.

“What? Wait, hold on a second… Could you please stop calling me Cure Flower? It’s been almost 50 years since I’ve retired from being a Precure,”

said Kaoruko as she laughed bitterly.

“To us fairies, the protectors of the Great Heart Tree, Cure Flower is a legendary Precure that we are greatly indebted to. We aren’t going to start calling you by your real name. Aren’t I right, Coupe-sama?”

Cologne was hoping for Coupe to agree with him, but Coupe remained motionless and expressionless as ever.

“Very well. But don’t go talking and flying in front of any other human but me, you understand?”

“I can’t vouch for the others, but I promise. Anyway, I have chosen that girl to be the next Precure!”

“What was that!?”

Kaoruko’s shock did not go unnoticed.

“From what I could see when I was in Coupe’s belly, she has elegant legs and great reflexes. However, what I was most taken by was her lovely Heart Flower, the White Lily. It was pure and glistening and…”

Before he could finish, Kaoruko interrupted him firmly,

“If you’re thinking of turning Yuri-chan into a Precure, I won’t allow it.”

“Why not?”

“Weren’t you listening? Her father is missing! This is no time for her to become a Precure.”

“I *was* listening. And despite all that, her Heart Flower hasn’t withered in the slightest. What emotional strength. It was like she was born to be a Precure,”

said Cologne as his eyes sparkled.

For a moment, Kaoruko looked like she was impressed. She immediately regained her composure and repeated herself with an even stricter tone of voice,

“I forbid it! Find someone else!”

Cologne was unfazed.

“Cure Flower! The Great Heart Tree is in danger now that the Desert Apostles have begun to move again. It has instructed me to find girls who could become Precure with great haste. Cure Flower, you’ve begun to feel it, haven’t you?”

he lashed out at Kaoruko.

“…”

Kaoruko couldn’t respond. Cologne was right. About a month ago, the pendant on her chest began to emit a dull glow - the same pendant that sealed away Dune’s, the leader of the Desert Apostles, power.

Using her pendant, she sensed Dune and the Desert Apostles approaching Earth and ordered Coupe to erect a barrier over the entire botanical garden.

Having made the first move, the chances that Dune would come to the botanical garden in search of his lost powers were almost zero.

Her pendant hadn't glowed since, even when Kaoruko went outside the barrier. Because of that, she assumed that Dune had given up on the Earth and had almost let her guard down.

Yet, Cologne appeared in front of Coupe and herself, informing them that he was sent by the Great Heart Tree to give birth to new Precures who would stand up to the Desert Apostles.

- Had Dune not given up on taking over the Earth?

Kaoruko wondered to herself, but couldn't find an answer.

While she had the help of Coupe, Kaoruko had to face the Desert Apostles by herself in grand battle. Having gone through that experience, she felt that it was all too cruel to force such a fate upon Yuri. As she was now, it was impossible for Yuri to face the Desert Apostles.

After a long silence, Kaoruko looked Cologne in the eye and repeated herself,

"I'm sure there is another girl who is fit to be a Precure. Find her."

Her voice was calmer than before, but left no room for opposition.

"…very well. I will search elsewhere."

With that, Cologne vanished, leaving the greenhouse.

As they matured, the fairies who protected the Great Heart Tree gained various powers and abilities. Fairies who were in their final form like Coupe could sense when their partner Precures were in danger, take on human forms to come to their aid, erect barriers and teleport. Fairies of Cologne's level could only fly and turn invisible.

After sensing that Cologne was no longer around, Kaoruko asked Coupe,

"Does Yuri-chan really have what it takes to become a Precure?"

Coupe didn't respond and instead directed his gaze towards the ceiling of the greenhouse, staring blankly at the darkening sky.

Thinking that Coupe shared her sentiments, she turned her back towards the greenhouse.

The veil of darkness had completely descended. Sounds made by a kitchen knife rang from one of the lit apartments at the botanical garden employee housing block.

Tsukikage Yuri was chopping spring onions. They were for the miso soup that she was preparing as part of the dinner for her mother, who was about to arrive home from work. One thing was on her mind.

She had to tell her mother what she learnt from Kaoruko. She could already see the disappointment that surpassed even her own. She mustn't worsen her mother's condition, not when she just started thinking positively and working again. She must find a way to give her mother hope.

…is what Yuri was thinking to herself.

Haruna, who was a housewife, began working at a shop in the Kibōgahana Station about a year before Yuri enrolled at Myōdōin Academy Middle School.

While it was just middle school, the fees for a private school were nothing to scoff at. They were barely able to scrape through on her father's civil servant salary. To help her family out, Haruna started working herself.

Yuri was fine with attending a public middle school, but her primary 6 homeroom teacher noticed her exceptional grades and suggested applying to Myōdōin Academy. Thinking for her daughter's future, Haruna agreed.

There were days when Yuri had to stop by the deli when club activities ran late. However, she was skilled enough to whip something up herself in a very short amount of time.

Yuri took a great deal of pride in making food that made her parents smack their lips.

Her father, a bookworm, could only use the word "delicious" to describe her cooking. Her mother would give detailed feedback and was instrumental in the improvement of her skills.

As she had stopped by the botanical garden earlier that day, Yuri didn't have time to prepare anything complicated. At least she could make her mother's favorite stew and miso soup.

- All that's left is to find a way prevent mother from losing hope.

Yuri continued pondering as she cooked. Just when she came up with an idea, she heard her mother's footsteps coming from the stairwell.

She added the spring onions and tofu into the pot, letting it simmer for awhile before turning off the gas. She then set the table for three, portioning out the boiled potatoes, salad and sashimi. She has bought the sashimi from the supermarket on the way back from the botanical garden.

Haruna entered the room without saying a word.

“How did it go?”

“I’ll fill you in, go get changed and wash your hands.”

“Right, right. I’m beginning to wonder who the mother is here.”

She forced a laugh and left the kitchen, making her way to the master bedroom.

Yuri was relieved to see that her mother’s mood had improved after returning from work and scooped out the rice and miso soup.

Having changed into her home gown, Haruna returned. She sat down and enquired about the missing Hideaki.

As calmly as possible, Yuri relayed all the information she received from Kaoruko. Just as expected, Haruna’s expression clouded over.

“I see…”

She then hung her head.

“Mother, don’t be like that. After all, no news is good news, right? Father could have found the Great Heart Tree and is now obsessed with his research.”

Haruna continued to look downwards.

Yuri realized that she was just saying that to console her mother as, before his disappearance, her father would call back at least twice a week. She let out a sigh and said,

“Mother, the miso soup is getting cold. Let’s eat.”

Haruna lifted her head and took hold of the chopsticks.

“Oh?”

She finally realized that there was enough food for three.

“I made extra in case father came home.”

Yuri waited for her mother’s reaction.

Looking like she was deep in thought for a while, Haruna finally opened her mouth to speak.

“Thank you Yuri-chan. Your father would be happy to see that.”

They put their hands together before proceeding to eat. Then,

“Yuri-chan, what if he doesn’t come back tonight? What are you going to do with the food?”

“We can cook the sashimi and have it for tomorrow’s lunch.”

“That’s just like you.”

This was the first time Haruna laughed in earnest since Hideaki’s disappearance. Yuri was delighted and suddenly felt more talkative than usual. She started talking about her club activities.

When she was in primary school, she was already physically gifted and was always chosen to take part in the relay race every sports festival.

In middle school, she had a growth spurt and was scouted by the volleyball and basketball clubs. Turning them down due to her distaste for group sports, she settled on the track and field club as she could practice by herself.

It was not that she was shy around others. It was just that she took joy in practicing by herself, free from distraction, honing her craft and improving her endurance and fortitude.

Her efforts paid off. By her second year of middle school, she had won 1st place in the city’s 100 meter dash and 2nd place in the prefectural 100 meter dash. She was qualified to represent the prefecture in the upcoming nationals that fall.

Haruna was delighted to hear the news from her daughter.

“If the competition’s on a Sunday, I’ll come cheer you on! I’ll splurge on the lunch too, so be sure to look forward to it!”

“I’m kind of under a ton of pressure.”

Contrary to her words, Yuri looked completely at ease.

That moment, Haruna glanced at the hallway.

“What is it?”

Yuri asked and her mother responded unsurely,

“Just now, it felt like there was someone at the door…”

“What!?”

They looked at each other and stood up at the same time.

“There’s no one in the hall...”

said Haruna as she let out a sigh.

Without saying a word, Yuri opened the front door and looked down both sides of the corridor. There was no one to be found.

“Mother, don’t say things like that. You’re getting our hopes up for nothing,”

said Yuri to her mother as she closed the door.

“I’m sorry, Yuri-chan.”

Haruna backed away and apologized.

“It’s nothing to apologize for. About tomorrow’s lunch, it looks like we’ll be cooking the sashimi after all,”

said Yuri with a gentle smile and her mother’s facial expression softened.

After dinner, mother and daughter did the dishwashing together.

While Haruna was in the bath, Yuri took the time to prepare for the next day’s English class in her room.

The school that she went to, Myōdōin Academy, was an integrated school – having both a middle and high school. It was a high performing school that attracted top students from all over the prefecture. Yet, Yuri always came in first in her level.

Most top students, to prepare themselves for the university entrance exams, would attend cram schools or prep schools. Yuri was able to maintain her grades just by revising and paying attention in class. She would actively seek the help of her teachers to clarify hard-to-understand topics. Not only that, because of her love for reading, she was always absorbing knowledge that was beyond her curriculum.

“Yuri-chan, the bath’s free!”

Hearing her mother’s voice, Yuri put away her notes and textbooks.

“I’ll be right there!”

She made her way towards the bathroom.

Before entering the bathtub, she took her time to carefully shampoo her long hair.

Yuri felt the stress that she was under because of her missing father melt away in the bath and started to doze off. She suddenly woke up when she felt like she was being watched from the other side of the bathroom door.

“Who’s there?”

Yuri sprang up from the bath and slid the bathroom door open but there was no one there.

“Yuri-chan, is something wrong?”

came the voice of her mother from the living room.

“No, it’s nothing.”

She returned to the bathtub to continue her soak. Exiting the bathroom, she wrapped a towel around herself and dried her hair with the hairdryer.

A horrible thought crossed her mind when she realized that the presence was similar to the one she felt at the greenhouse.

- I’ve read about the dead returning as ghosts and possessing those who were close to them in life…

Yuri then shook her head and reassured herself.

“What am I saying… There’s no such things as ghosts.”

With that said, she tapped herself on the head and continued to dry her hair.

Still, Yuri couldn't shake the feeling of being watched even when she was in class or running on the track. She was always checking her surroundings but couldn't catch anyone watching her.

- What is wrong with me?

At a loss, she sought advice from her friend, Kurumi Momoka, while having lunch together.

"I'm sure it's just a boy who has a crush on you,"

said Momoka with a smile devoid of worry.

Yuri denied that possibility, but Momoka went on.

"You know, you might not be aware of this, but you'd be really cute if you took off those specs. You should switch to contacts."

The fact that it was coming from Momoka, a model for a teen fashion magazine, made Yuri frown for a second. She then forced a smile.

"I don't think so."

Momoka snatched away Yuri's glasses before miming a camera with her index fingers and thumbs, looking at Yuri through it.

"I'm absolutely certain! Wanna be in a magazine with me next time?"

"Please stop teasing me."

said Yuri, getting a little upset. She took her glasses back from Momoka and put them on.

"Aw, what a shame. You'd be so popular."

"It was foolish of me to come to you for advice."

Yuri returned the lid to her lunch box, got up from the bench and headed back to the school building.

"Wait for me, Yuri~."

Momoka ran after her in a panic.

Momoka was raised in a family with a professional cameraman for a father and a model-turned-fashion designer for a mother who opened her own shop. When she was young, she was an amateur model and had since gone professional. Her beauty and style isolated her as she was deemed unobtainable by the boys and envied by the girls.

Yuri also experienced a similar isolation because of her outstanding grades and was always by herself.

In the second year of middle school, they found themselves in the same class. While their personalities were like oil and water, they naturally became friends as they were both always alone.

On days when she had to skip class for gravure shoots, Momoka would borrow the notes that Yuri took in class.

When they went out shopping for clothes, she would always surprise Yuri with style combinations that Yuri would have never thought of herself.

Yuri felt the most relaxed around Momoka.

Yet, even while chatting with Momoka, she never shook the feeling of being watched.

It was not until a week after Yuri visited the botanical garden did she finally uncover the culprit.

Yuri was in her room revising for the next day's classes. Just like before, she felt someone watching her and looked over her shoulder. Suddenly, a plush toy-looking creature that she had never seen before appeared in front of her.

"Who!? Are you?"

"I apologize for startling you. My name is Cologne. I have been observing you for the past week."

"So, the one who was watching me… was you?"

Cologne nodded and Yuri narrowed her eyes.

"So you were the one who was peaking at me from outside the bathroom."

At that remark, Cologne's face turned red and he burst out angrily,

"How impertinent! My appearances aside, I am a gentleman. While it's true I was outside the bathroom, I did not see you naked."

Cologne was so upset that, instead of being surprised, Yuri started laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha… Alright, I'll believe you."

The anger disappeared from his face and he floated gently towards Yuri, landing on her desk.

"Tsukikage Yuri, I have a request."

"Already? But this is our first meeting."

"From your perspective, this *is* our first meeting. But I have been observing you for a week. You're smart and you take everything you do seriously. Would you do me the honor of becoming a Precure?"

"Precure?"

"Emissaries of justice who protect the Earth from the Desert Apostles. The Desert Apostles plan to turn the Earth into a desert and wither the Heart Flowers of those who live on it."

Yuri had no idea what Cologne was going on about.

"Just what are these Desert Apostles and Heart Flowers?"

"Indeed, normal humans might not be able to comprehend what I'm saying. Right. I'll start from the top. The Desert Apostles are said to be a nomadic race from a planet beyond the galaxy.

Having reached the end of its lifespan, their planet died out. They now wander the stars in search of planets to call their new home, turning them into deserts – their preferred environment. Possessing advanced technology, they exhaust the planet's resources and move on to the next world."

"They're basically aliens?"

It sounded like something straight out of a science fiction novel. But Yuri decided to hear Cologne out, seeing how serious he was.

"Having turned multiple planets into deserts, the Desert Apostles finally set their sights on Earth 400 years ago."

"400 years ago? That's right after the beginning of the Edo period."

"You're sharp as always. Sensing the danger, the Great Heart Tree gave birth to fairies like me. We bestow the Seeds of the Precure that allow girls to turn into Precure to protect the Earth from the Desert Apostles."

"Hold it. Did you say Great Heart Tree?"

"Right. That's the tree your father and the others were searching for. The Great Heart Tree is the source of all life on Earth and there's only one of it in existence. Every human being is in possession of a Heart Flower within them and if they all wither, the Great Heart Tree dies."

"Do I have one of those Heart Flowers too?"

"Of course. Yours is the lovely White Lily."

"So you can see my Heart Flower?"

"Indeed. And the White Lily in the language of flowers is…?"

"Purity and grace."

"A fitting Heart Flower for you, don't you think?"

Yuri remained silent for a while and collected her thoughts.

During that silence, Cologne was worried that Yuri wouldn't believe him and would refuse to become a Precure.

However, Yuri proved him wrong. Looking Cologne in the eye, she said,

"I understand. All I have to do is become one of these Precures and protect the Heart Flowers of the people and, in doing so, protect the Great Heart Tree?"

Cologne felt relieved after hearing those words.

“Precisely. Nothing less from the girl I set my eyes on.”

“Don’t celebrate just yet.”

Yuri pushed up her falling spectacles.

“Let’s say I do become a Precure. Will I be able to meet the Great Heart Tree?”

“That’s… a possibility. The Great Heart Tree is always changing its location to hide itself from evil people and beings from other worlds. Even I, a fairy born from the Tree, cannot pinpoint its location. But if do become a Precure and develop your powers, the Great Heart Tree will eventually appear before you.”

“Then I shall become a Precure. I might be able to run into my father… Am I right?”

“I’m sorry… That is something that I cannot promise you.”

Yuri let out a small laugh at the sight of Cologne’s face that was filled with regret.

“Did I say something funny?”

“That’s not it. In situations like these, shouldn’t you have lied and said that I would be able to meet my father?”

“That’s… well…”

“My, aren’t you an honest one. I like you. So will you be the one to turn me into a Precure?”

“I would very much like to do that right this instant. But there is someone who’s against it. Cure Flower.”

“Cure Flower?”

“The Precure who protected this planet 50 years ago by fending off all the Desert Apostles’ attacks and defeating the strongest of them all, Dune.”

“That’s not in any of my textbooks.”

“I wouldn’t expect it to be. She *was* fighting the Desert Apostles. They tend to avoid the public eye. Not to mention, Cure Flower’s power earned her the title of strongest Precure in history. She defeated most of her foes before anyone noticed.”

“My parents weren’t even born 50 years ago,”

whispered Yuri to herself as Cologne let out a grin.

“Oh, but Cure Flower is still alive and well. In fact, she’s someone you know very well.”

“Someone I know?”

Yuri was visibly shocked.

“The curator of the Kibōgahana Botanical Garden, Hanasaki Kaoruko.”

“Kaoruko-san…!?”

Yuri let out a big gasp.

Hanasaki Kaoruko was in the Doll House sipping Darjeeling tea and talking to Coupe.

“It’s been a week. Just where on Earth has Cologne gone to?”

“…”

Just like always, Coupe simply stood, staring blankly into the distance.

“I know I said that there were other girls fit to become Precure… Perhaps they weren’t as easy to find as I thought.”

Kaoruko cleared her throat and Cologne suddenly appeared right in front of her.

“Cure Flower, I’ve found one!”

“C, Cologne!? Is that true?”

“Of course. Come on in!”

yelled Cologne in the direction of the entrance. The door opened and Tsukikage Yuri threaded her way in.

“Yuri-chan!?”

Kaoruko gasped and turned to glare at Cologne.

“What is the meaning of this? Didn’t you spend the week searching for another suitable Precure candidate?”

“There is no one more suitable than Yuri. I have spent the week carefully observing her. I have no doubt.”

“Cologne…!”

Before she could continue, Yuri interrupted her.

“Kaoruko-san, I’ve heard everything from Cologne. If I become a Precure and protect the Great Heart Tree, I might be able to meet my father. Please, let me become a Precure!”

Kaoruko let out a sigh. Her expression became firm and she started to lecture Yuri,

“Yuri-chan, it is dangerous to become a Precure half-heartedly. You might even lose your life.”

“I am fully aware of the consequences. However, I want to protect the Great Heart Tree from the Desert Apostles, just like you did as Cure Flower! Please let me become a Precure!”

Yuri stared at Kaoruko with an unwavering gaze. Her determination was as clear as day.

- This girl is serious.

But if she allowed Yuri to become a Precure, Yuri would have to face the Desert Apostles in grueling battle and maybe even lose her life. That is the one thing she would not do – cause Yuri's mother even more sadness. That is when she offered a proposal.

"I can see that you're serious about becoming a Precure. But you will have to learn how to fight. I will teach you."

"*You* will teach me?"

Yuri appeared calm, but was feeling uneasy on the inside. Kaoruko may be a former Precure, but she was close to being 65. Seeing her fret, Cologne grinned and said,

"Yuri, don't underestimate Cure Flower. Decades ago she defeated all the black belts to become the youngest ever winner of the National Karate Championships."

"I, I see…"

"Not a lot of people know that I used to do karate. Not even your father."

Kaoruko smiled.

In her fight to the death with Dune, leader of the Desert Apostles, she was rendered unable to practice karate anymore. Having no choice but to retire from the sport, she turned to studying botany. She never participated in another karate match since. Still, she was confident enough to teach the basics of karate.

If she trained her harshly, Yuri might just give up on the idea of becoming a Precure. That is what Kaoruko thought to herself.

"If you can survive my training, I'll let you become a Precure,"

said Kaoruko.

Yuri caught a glimpse of the sides of Kaoruko's mouth rising.

The next day, Yuri approached Yabe-sensei, the advisor for the track and field club, to turn in her resignation form.

Yabe was fervently opposed, but Yuri was resolute. He knew Yuri's abilities better than anyone else and tried to convince her to quit after the Nationals the following month. It was to no avail.

When Yuri first joined the club, Yabe felt that she would be a runner capable of representing Japan and offered to train her for not only the 100 meter dash, but the 200 meter dash as well. However, Yuri was only interested in the 100 meter dash and refused.

Despite being a first-year middle school student, Yuri cited the phrase "He who runs after two hares will catch neither", claimed that she wasn't capable enough and wanted to focus on the 100 meter dash.

He still remembered the determination on her face. She could not be persuaded once her mind was made up. That resonated with him and he had since given up on the 200 meter dash.

- She looks just like she did on that day.

Yabe yielded and accepted Yuri's resignation form.

As Yuri was about to leave the staff room, Yabe called out to her and inquired about her reasons for leaving the club.

"Personal reasons,"

Yuri responded with a smile.

"Personal reasons, eh?"

He returned Yuri's smile. He couldn't have imagined the dangerous journey that Yuri was about to embark on.

Yuri proceeded to the botanical garden to inform Kaoruko of her quitting the track and field club.

Kaoruko was taken aback by her decision, but steeled herself and started talking about her karate practice schedule.

She was to practice for an hour before school, for two hours after school and from noon to night on weekends.

Following that schedule, they practiced continuously in the closed-up Doll House, in the space where Coupe stood, wearing their dōgis.

Yuri surpassed all of Kaoruko's expectations.

Forget complaining, Yuri absorbed everything that Kaoruko taught her like a sponge to water.

The katas, or forms, in karate are all based on a series of blocks, punches and kicks. While differing in name depending on the school, the fundamental katas were: Heian, Tekki, Bassai, Kankū, Jion and Enpi.

Yuri mastered all six katas in a mere month.

Next, Kaoruko drilled her in Shōteiuchi, effective in close quarters combat. Generating power from the ground, the user would close in on the target in a flash and strike their vital points with the base of their palm. This technique was perfect for Yuri.

Yuri made it her own in two weeks. Even though Kaoruko was able to block Yuri's punches, the force from her punches knocked the wind out of her on multiple occasions.

- At this rate, I'm going to be the one to give up.

Although she didn't say it, Kaoruko was thoroughly impressed at Yuri's affinity for karate.

After Yuri returned from her shower after practice that day, Karouko sat her down in the Doll House to tell her something.

"Yuri-chan, I'm not getting any younger. There is a lot more that I want to teach you but my body just can't keep up. From tomorrow onwards, you'll be continuing your training at the dōjo of Myōdōin School of Martial Arts."

"Myōdōin? That's…"

"Yes, it is the dōjo that the founder of your school, Myōdōin Gentarō, teaches at. We have known each other for a long time, and he has agreed to let you participate in their training sessions."

"…"

Yuri was not about to let her mother shoulder the cost for her lessons and paused. Making a guess as to what was bothering her, Kaoruko went on to say,

"Don't worry about the money. When I said that you were a prodigy capable of surpassing evem me, they were willing to take you in on scholarship."

Yuri felt bad for Kaoruko, seeing how much she was doing for her. Kaoruko saw her hesitation and continued,

"The Myōdōin style is based on aikido, not karate. You redirect your opponent's moves using the Ki that is in your body. You will also be able to learn how to throw your opponent."

Knowing how interesting karate was from Kaoruko's lessons, Yuri's body ached. Thinking that if she aimed higher as a martial artist, Kaoruko would permit her to become a Precure, Yuri conceded,

"…I understand. I shall join."

"Oh? That's great."

To be honest, Kaoruko was 99% willing to allow Yuri to become a Precure. But she still had 1% of doubt. Yuri was way too serious. Not that there was anything wrong with that. It was because of her seriousness that she was able to master the basics of karate in such a short time. However, she didn't make time to develop herself mentally. It wasn't something that could be easily explained in words. If karate was an "active" marital art, then aikido, the basis of the Myōdōin style, was a "passive" one. If one were to familiarize themselves with the style, one would naturally be able to develop mentally. That is what Kaoruko thought when she recommended Yuri to study the Myōdōin's style.

However, Yuri did not have a chance to pass through Myōdōin's doors.

The next day, the Desert Apostles finally made their move.

Kaoruko usually ate with the other employees. Feeling like soba, she paid a visit to the nearby soba restaurant.

The restaurant was practically full. While waiting for her order of tempura soba, she watched the news on the television set that was placed on the counter top.

All of a sudden, static filled the screen and the picture changed.

A masked man appeared on screen, sitting on a throne-like chair, in what appeared to be a dimly lit cave. In front of him were two men and a woman.

It was not known if the woman approached the camera or if the camera zoomed in on her face. Her hair was tied up in a chignon and she sported golden clothes. The woman, who looked to be between the ages of 24 and 25, let out a haughty laugh.

"We are the Desert Apostles, you see~. Cure Flower, we know that you're still alive~. You seemed to have hidden your presence, but we've already pinpointed your general location~! Prepare yourself, for we're coming for that pendant of yours~!"

Once again, the screen filled with static and the news came back on as if nothing happened.

"What was that?"

"Someone must have hijacked the signal to play a prank,"

came the voices of a young couple that were sitting together. The other patrons showed zero interest as they leaned forwards to eat their soba.

Only one person in the entire room went white as a sheet. Kaoruko checked her pendant over and over again but it was not showing any signs of response. She turned towards the counter and yelled,

"Something urgent came up! I'll be leaving the money here!"

Kaoruko tossed the money on the counter and made a dash for the exit.

"But your order's ready!"

said the shop staff as he looked around. Kaoruko was already nowhere to be seen.

As Kaoruko was running back to the botanical garden, she pondered the words of the female Desert Apostle.

There was no mistaking the fact that her pendant glowed 3 months ago in response to Dune approaching the Earth. She immediately got Coupe to erect a barrier to hide her location, but Dune must have been able to pinpoint her general whereabouts.

If so, why did Dune not attack?

There was only one possibility. Dune must not have regenerated completely from their battle 50 years ago. After coming to locate the pendant that sealed away his powers, he must have again distanced himself from Earth to plan his retrieval strategy. And part of that strategy must have involved mobilizing those 4 Desert Apostles who hijacked the signal.

50 years ago, Dune sent forth numerous commanders in his bid to turn the planet into a desert. These 4 Desert Apostles must be the new commanders.

Having lost her Precure powers, she had no choice but to rely on the new generation of Precure to put a stop to their plans.

Kaoruko burst into the Doll House and shouted to Coupe,

“The Desert Apostles are on the move! Send a message to Cologne! Get him to bring Yuri-chan here right away!”

Coupe blinked, nodded, closed his eyes and made contact with Cologne telepathically.

15 minutes later, Cologne, with Yuri in tow, came running into the greenhouse.

“I can no longer oppose to you becoming a Precure. Cologne, give Yuri the Heart Perfume.”

“Roger!”

Cologne extended his right hand out to Yuri and a perfume-bottle-like item materialized before her.

The moment she grabbed the Heart Perfume, an intense holy light radiated from its center. The light enveloped her body and her school uniform vanished. It was replaced with a white one-piece dress.

“I knew it! Yuri was a chosen one!”

Cologne was brimming with excitement. Kaoruko nodded and continued,

“Yuri-chan, gently shake the Heart Perfume.”

Doing as she was told, the front face of the Heart Perfume slid open, revealing a round depression.

“Alright! Go, Seed of the Precure!”

A round Seed of the Precure came flying out of the heart mark on Cologne’s chest.

Yuri caught the Seed, set it within the Heart Perfume and shook it again to close it.

“Say ‘Precure, open my heart!’ and spray the perfume on your body. You will then become a Precure.”

Yuri acknowledged Cologne’s words, held up the Heart Perfume and yelled,

“Precure! Open my heart!”

First spraying the perfume on her chest, the white one-piece turned into a silver and indigo costume that resembled a long dress. Split open boldly in the front, it gradually grew longer as it reached a back, train style. Continuing on to her arms, a long, light indigo glove that reached her forearm and a silver and indigo ornamented bracelet appeared on her right and left arms respectively. Spraying the perfume on her legs, white lace-up boots appeared. Finally, she sprayed the perfume on her hair. Her bangs extended to the top-left in the shape of a crescent moon, her hair turned purple and with the materializing of an indigo rose hair accessory, her transformation was complete.

Kaoruko was beaming at Yuri’s gorgeous appearance while Cologne whistled in admiration.

“You must give your Precure-self a name.”

“A name? Cologne and I have already talked this over.”

Yuri made the shape of a flower bud with her hands in front of her left shoulder. As she spread her fingers open, she exclaimed,

“A lone flower, glistening in the moonlight… Cure Moonlight!”

She struck an elegant and graceful pose. That was the moment Cure Moonlight was born.

“Cure Moonlight…! What a lovely name. But, why Moonlight?”

Cure Moonlight blushed.

“I love Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata.”

“That name suits you perfectly. All you need to know now is how to purify a Desertorian.”

Before she could continue,

“Don’t worry, I’ve taught her that too,”

Cologne chimed in and winked.

“Well, that’s Cologne for you. Always prepared.”

Kaoruko gave a wry smile, but was comforted when she saw how close Yuri and Cologne had gotten as partners in such a short period of time.

That moment, Coupe let out a small groan. Following which, Cologne suddenly became serious.

“I can sense the presence of the Desert Apostles! They’re close!”

Kaoruko tensed up and nodded.

“Cure Moonlight, here we go!”

“Right!”

“Everyone, grab hold of Coupe!”

The three of them clung onto Coupe.

In a flash, Coupe disappeared.

The place they arrived at using Coupe's teleportation ability was a car park near the Kibōgahana Station.

Screams could be heard from the station.

Observing the front of the station behind several parked cars, they witnessed the soldiers of the Desert Apostles, Sunakkis, assaulting and chasing pedestrians. Leading them was the woman from the television broadcast.

"Is that all you can do~? Let me, Sasorina, show you how to drive humans to the depths of despair~!"

Looking around, Sasorina caught sight of a trembling, middle-aged lady in the station shop. It was Yuri's mother, Haruna. Sasorina's eyes shone with a bewitching golden sparkle. She was examining Haruna's Heart Flower. It was a bouquet of three Rape Blossoms, but one of the flowers had withered and it was about to snap off at the stalk.

"He, he, he~… I see I've found myself a lady with a beautifully withered Heart Flower~! "

Sasorina thrust both of her hands out towards Haruna.

"Heart Flower, come on out~!"

Beams of light extended from under Haruna's feet. Before she could let out a scream, her body, along with the beams of light, vanished. She was transformed into an upside down crystal octagonal pyramid with a crystal sphere at its tip. The crystal floated over to Sasorina.

Inside the crystal octagonal pyramid was the wilted Heart Flower while inside the crystal sphere was a shrunken-down, unconscious Haruna.

Sasorina broke the crystal spear off and tossed it aside.

"Won't be needing this~."

It rolled on the ground for a little bit before coming to a sudden halt. It rose up in the air and flew towards the car park.

It stopped before Cure Moonlight and Cologne appeared, holding the sphere.

"I heard a woman scream…"

said Cure Moonlight. Cologne pushed the sphere in Cure Moonlight's face. Upon seeing the sight of her comatose mother, Cure Moonlight was at a loss for words.

"H, Haruna-san!"

It was Kaoruko who broke the silence.

“Cure Moonlight! Your mother’s Heart Flower has been stolen! If she remains separated from it for too long, it will wither and she will remain trapped within the crystal sphere forever!”

After hearing what Cologne had to say, Cure Moonlight started trembling with rage.

“Cure Moonlight! It is dangerous to fight out of anger! Just think of rescuing your mother and fight with composure.”

Cure Moonlight’s trembling stopped.

“I will protect my mother’s Heart Flower!”

Having regained her composure, Cure Moonlight leapt out and dashed towards the station.

She was astounded by her own speed.

- Is this the power of a Precure!?

Pulverizing the Sunakkis in an instant with a barrage of kicks and punches, she found herself standing in front of Sasorina.

“W, who are you supposed to be~?”

Sasorina let out a gasp of surprise.

“A Precure born to protect the Great Heart Tree and the Heart Flowers of the people, Cure Moonlight!”

“A, a Precure you say~!?”

She started to cower in fear, but was back on her feet in no time.

“So you guys *do* appear every time we try to take over the Earth~.”

“Return that Heart Flower this instant!”

“He, he, he~… That is something I cannot do~.”

“Then, I shall reclaim it by force!”

Cure Moonlight closed in on her and before she could strike her with her masterful Shōteiuchi, Sasorina vanished.

“What!?”

Cure Moonlight scanned her surroundings and found Sasorina standing beside a nearby post box.

“Desertorian, it’s time to make your appearance~!”

shouted Sasorina. The crystal containing Haruna's Heart Flower and the post box crossed each other. Together with a blinding light, the post box grew in size and sprouted arms and legs, turning into a monster. A Desertorian was born.

The Desertorian let out a roar and immediately tried to trample Cure Moonlight. With a timely jump, she avoided the assault. That jump took her 50 meters into the air.

- My jumping power has also exceeded my expectations! So this is the power of the Precure.

With the throbbing in her chest, Cure Moonlight felt confident.

She made a dive for the Desertorian, rolled over and let fly a flurry of kicks to its stomach with both her legs.

The Desertorian shrieked as it was blown away, crashing into the station wall.

She closed in on the Desertorian and was about to continue her assault when the hunched over Desertorian began to speak. It was as if words were being squeezed out from inside it.

"Why don't you call … You used to do so so often…"

Cure Moonlight halted in her tracks, perplexed by the words being spoken by the Desertorian in the middle of the fight.

As it stood up, it continued speaking,

"Do you know just how worried Yuri-chan is…?"

With the mention of her name, Cure Moonlight realized that the Desertorian was speaking out her mother's anguish.

"What tripe are you babbling on about~? Hurry up and defeat the Precure~!"

The Desertorian's gaze sharpened after taking that rebuke.

"Take this!"

It then proceeded to spit out letters and postcards that were turned into bombs.

Cure Moonlight performed multiple reverse summersaults to evade the bombs but was thrown back by the impact from the explosions.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha~… You're nothing but talk after all~! Let loose and fire away!"

The Desertorian started to moan.

“I can’t bear living without you! Come home!”

it lamented as it fired round after round.

Hearing her mother’s cries of anguish, Cure Moonlight couldn’t bring herself to attack and could only evade the attacks.

Seeing this, Cologne came flying.

“The only way to save your mother is to purify the Desertorian and reclaim her Heart Flower. Quickly, before her Heart Flower withers completely!”

Cure Moonlihgt nodded and glared at the Desertorian.

“The letters and postcards that you’re spitting out are full of people’s feelings. To turn them into bombs is unforgivable!”

Once she finished her line, she closed in on the Desertorian and rained powerful kicks and punches on it.

Having sustained heavy damage, standing up was all it could muster. Cure Moonlight grabbed its arm and hurled it into the sky. She followed it up with a jump, passed the Desertorian in mid-air, flipped around, dived and landed a crushing blow on its stomach.

The Desertorian let out a scream, and collided with the ground, leaving a deep impact crater.

It no longer had the strength to crawl, let alone get up.

“Now’s your chance! Purify it with your Moon Tact!”

At Cologne’s words, Moonlight yelled,

“Gather, floral power! Moon Tact!”

The flower emblem on her chest shone brightly. Using her right hand, she pulled the Moon Tact out of it. The tip of the Moon Tact had a crystal attached to it and the thick crystal dome at its centre could draw in and condense floral power – the same power that was used to purify Desertorians and extract Heart Flowers.

Cure Moonlight held up the Moon Tact.

“Flowers, shine! Precure, Silver Forte Wave!”

She swung the Tact down and an energy ball in the shape of a flower burst forth from its tip.

The energy ball hit the Desertorian right smack in its belly, enveloping it in holy light and lifting it up into the air.

“Haaaaaaa!”

shouted Cure Moonlight. She waved the Moon Tact, like she was drawing circles in the air, and the holy light grew more intense. The purification had begun.

The Desertorian became at ease, dissolved into sparkles of light and vanished, leaving behind the crystal containing Haruna’s Heart Flower.

She grabbed it and saw that the Rape Blossoms inside it weren’t withered anymore and finally let out a sigh of relief.

Sasorina, who was watching everything unfold before her, flew into a rage. She teleported and appeared on top of the fountain’s statue behind Moonlight and let down her tied-up hair.

“Eat this!”

Extending and turning into a long braid, her hair shot towards Cure Moonlight and wrapped itself around her neck.

“Cologne, I leave this in your care!”

Cure Moonlight entrusted the crystal containing the Heart Flower to Cologne and grabbed the hair around her neck.

“He,he, he, now you’ve done it! The tip of my hair has a stinger with lots of venom in it~. You’ll be going to heaven with just one sting~!”

The end of her hair morphed into the shape of a scorpion’s tail and made a beeline for Cure Moonlight’s neck.

Cure Moonlight wasn’t fazed in the slightest.

“I will never lose to those who toy with the hearts of people, Desert Apostle!”

With a single knifehand strike, she severed Sasorina’s snake-like hair. Together with the stinger end wrapped around her neck, she fell to the ground.

Cure Moonlight grabbed the other end and, as if winding up for a hammer throw, swung the hair around her.

Sasorina, who was attached to the other end, was lifted into the sky by her hair.

“Gyaaaa, what are you doing~!?”

Cure Moonlight get go and the dizzy Sasorina was launched into the sky and crashed into side of a nearby building.

Sasorina, who was implanted into the wall, bit her lip.

“This was only a greeting~. We won’t go so easy on you next time~. Remember this!”

With her excuses out of the way, she teleported away. The fallen Sunakkis vanished along with her.

“Great work Cure Moonlight. Mmph… A Heart Seed is about to be born.”

Cologne turned his back to Cure Moonlight and waved his tail. Like a chicken laying an egg, a Heart Seed that looked like a small yellow coin was pushed out.

Cure Moonlight caught it in her hand and it started to glowed.

“What…?”

Opening her hand, the Heart Seed vanished.

“Where did the Heart Seed go?”

“No worries. It’s being kept in the Heart Pot that Coupe-sama is holding on to.”

Cologne smiled.

Looking back at the parking lot, she saw Kaoruko beckoning her.

People were starting to gather around the rotary in front of the station.

Rushing over to the parking lot and following Kaoruko’s directions, she held onto Coupe together with Cologne.

Once again, Coupe disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Tsukikage Haruna regained her consciousness in the Doll House.

“Mother, are you alright?”

Yuri, who was back to normal, called out to her mom.

“Yuri-chan…!”

Haruna, who was stretched out on a sofa, got up. Kaoruko smiled.

“You’re finally awake. Haruna-san, are you alright?”

“Curator!? It has been awhile!”

Haruna bowed, but then tilted her head to the side.

“What… am I doing here?”

Kaoruko gave Yuri a wink and said,

“There was a big fiasco in front of the station. By the time I got there, you were lying unconscious in front of the store. Yuri came rushing over too and we carried you back here.”

“I see… I don’t remember a thing. I’m sorry for the trouble.”

Haruna lowered her head.

“Thank goodness you seem perfectly unharmed. Yuri-chan, why don’t you take your mother home?”

“Right. Well then.”

Yuri bowed to Kaoruko and reached down to pick up Cologne, who was pretending to be a plush toy, from the table.

“Ah!”

Haruna let out a small sound.

“What’s wrong, mother?”

“I forgot to hand over my shift. I’ll be making my way to the station.”

“Got it. I’ll tag along.”

“Thank you. I know! It’s been awhile. What say we eat out tonight?”

Haruna smiled and bowed once again to Kaoruko before taking her leave with Yuri.

On the way to the station, Yuri sensed that her mother's heart was at ease.

"Mother, did something good happen today?"

"Not really. It's just that…"

Haruna went quiet.

"Just that?"

"You'll make fun of me if I say it."

Haruna giggled like a schoolgirl.

"I won't laugh. Tell me."

"You promise?"

"I promise I won't laugh."

"Alright. I had a dream while I was unconscious."

"What kind of a dream?"

"One where I became a postbox."

"What!?"

Yuri gasped and stopped in her tracks.

Haruna was taken aback by Yuri's reaction. She wasn't laughing.

"Oh? You're not laughing?"

"And then what happened?"

Yuri was trying to stop herself from shaking. Haruna let out a chuckle.

"I went on a rampage and hurled insults at your father."

Haruna was enjoying herself. Yuri was relieved to see that she didn't know that it was her own daughter that defeated the Desertorian.

"That aside, what's with the plush toy that you've been carrying around with you recently?"

It was Cologne's turn to tense up.

"I saw it in the window of a fancy goods store. I fell in love with it, so I bought it."

“I see. I didn’t know you liked that kind of stuff.”

Haruna giggled like a schoolgirl again and took Cologne to study him more closely.

“It’s not as cute as I’d thought. How about I buy you something cuter?”

Yuri couldn’t help herself and burst out laughing. She noticed Cologne glaring at her, unbeknownst to Haruna.

“I’m not too good with plush toys that are cute enough to be liked by anyone. He’s good the way he is, slightly cheeky.”

She laughed and took Cologne back from her mother.

“That reminds me, you used to have something like that when you were young.”

They arrived at the station as they were chatting.

The station was bustling with police and reporters. Haruna made her way to her workplace, explained what happened to the late shift staff and apologized.

Yuri was looking on and Cologne glared at her.

“Well, I’m *sorry* for being cheeky.”

Yuri giggled.

“Well, she *did* believe me. You’re lucky I’m not a fan of cute things.”

She cast Cologne a mischievous glance.

He sulked in return, but quickly turned it into a smile.

“Cologne, my mother said it was a dream. Does she actually remember everything that happened while she was unconscious?”

“Looks like it. She seems to have relieved a lot of stress through the Desertorian by speaking her mind.”

“I see… In any case, I’m glad to see that she’s happy again.”

“Hey, don’t forget that the battle with the Desert Apostles has only just begun. We can’t have you celebrating just yet.”

“Yes, I know. I will become stronger. I will fight until I am deemed worthy enough to meet with the Great Heart Tree.”

“That’s the spirit. The Great Heart Tree is watching over you. I don’t think it will be too long before you’ll be able to meet with it. I’m sure you’ll find a clue to your father’s disappearance.”

Yuri gave Cologne a big nod as Haruna returned.

“Finished?”

“Yup. Let’s get something good to eat.”

Haruna took hold of Yuri’s hand and started walking off.

It had been ages since she felt the warmth of her mother’s hand. With that, she followed her mother with a spring in her step.

Around the same time, within the Desert Apostles' hideout, Sasorina was relaying the news of the new Precure's appearance to the masked man. He was named Professor Sabaaku and was entrusted by Dune to oversee the Earth Desertification Project.

To the left and right of Sabaaku were the other two commanders, Cobraja and Kumojacky. They were overjoyed.

"Bravo! So, a new Precure *did* appear after all."

"…and? How strong was the Precure?"

Sasorina averted her gaze upon hearing Kumojacky's question.

"Today was nothing but a greeting so I can't say for sure yet~."

Kumojacky snickered.

"Knowing you, you lost and came running back here with your tail between your legs."

"Don't joke~! The next time we meet, I'll be sure to finish her off with these hands~!"

She approached Kumojacky and grabbed his collar.

"Hmph."

He shook her off and threatened her.

"The one to defeat the new Precure… will be me!"

"What are you talking about~? I saw her first~! No one needs a muscle head like you~."

"Say that again!?"

Kumojacky's well-trained pecs started twitching in anger.

"You're behaving like children."

Cobraja swept aside his long bangs and threw them a look of smug disdain before making his way to Sabaaku's chair.

"I implore you to leave the Precure's disposal to me."

Cobraja placed his right hand over his chest and took a bow.

"That's my job!"

"No, mine~!"

They drew closer to Cobraja, but were silenced by Sabaaku.

“I will not forgive independent action. I will be the one to decide who goes.”

He waved them aside, got up and left the room.

To help him take over the Earth, he gave birth to the three commanders who acted as his right-hand men.

Sabaaku had access to all the latest, cutting-edge technology on Dune’s Planetary Castle. Together with the Desert Apostle’s scientists, he first created Sasorina, followed by Kumojacky and finally, Cobraja. They were artificial humans created using the genes of three life forms that thrived in deserts – scorpions, spiders and cobras. Their genes were fused with the mostly wilted Heart Flowers of three people that he kidnapped. One could say that they were beings similar to Desertorians.

Sasorina used to be a nursery school teacher. After an unfortunate accident resulting in the death of one of her charges, she was rejected by society and suffered a mental breakdown necessitating hospitalization.

Kumojacky was aiming to become a professional martial artist. However, his rough demeanor and self-centered mindset only brought him misfortune and he was barred entry from all the schools. He was kidnapped while he was wallowing in despair.

Cobraja was a fashion coordinator. He abused models who weren’t as beautiful as he was and fought with designers who refused to produce clothes that were to his liking. Eventually, he was cast out from the fashion world.

Sabaaku had high hopes for these three commanders but was worried that their clashing personalities would cause problems.

Returning to his private quarters he cast his gaze upon the writhing, beautiful new life that was floating in the cultivation tank.

It was a curled-up young girl, floating like a baby in its mother’s womb. A wing-like appendage extended from her back.

“Hurry up and be born. My daughter,”

said Sabaaku in a gleeful trance.

End of Chapter 1